

March 27, 2008

MIT's Professor Susumu Tonegawa to be RIKEN BSI's Next Director

RIKEN (President: Ryoji Noyori) has made an informal decision to appoint Professor Susumu Tonegawa of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (RIKEN Fellow¹/Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator²) as the next director of the RIKEN Brain Science Institute (BSI). Professor Tonegawa is expected to serve as director for a term of four years from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2013. As the institute's director, he will be responsible for the management of BSI but will also continue the research he has been engaged in at MIT as a professor of that university. Director Shun-ichi Amari will retire from his post as director of BSI upon completion of his term on March 31, 2008. For the one-year interim period prior to Dr. Tonegawa's appointment as director, Deputy Director Keiji Tanaka will be appointed as acting director while Dr. Tonegawa remains as one of the advisors to BSI.

1. Overview of the RIKEN Brain Science Institute

Established in 1997 as Japan's core organization for the study of brain science, the RIKEN Brain Science Institute (BSI) brings together talented scientists and engineers from all over Japan and the world to undertake comprehensive, strategic research in brain science. BSI achieves results that have a global impact on scientific research in brain neuroscience in areas such as shedding light on memory and learning mechanisms, molecular mechanisms at critical stages, and neurological transmutation disorders including Alzheimer's disease and has produced many valuable personnel who are playing key roles in universities and institutions in Japan and overseas.

As the first Director of BSI, Dr. Masao Ito (present BSI special advisor) established a framework for hiring all staff through open recruitment procedures to make BSI a research organization recognized internationally. He also played a leading role in reforming practices in Japan's system of science and technology by setting a 20% quota for foreign staff recruitment and introducing strict evaluation procedures at BSI.

Director Shun-ichi Amari, who succeeded Special Advisor Ito as BSI's director in 2003, clearly defined the role of the institute and played an instrumental role in guiding the

institute through its formative years to grow into a research center of 500 staff, approximately 300 of whom are engaged in research. He has also enthusiastically promoted collaborative research in alliances between BSI and industry including the establishment of the RIKEN BSI-Toyota Collaboration Center within BSI.

Professor Tonegawa is director of the RIKEN-MIT Neuroscience Research Center at MIT and for 10 years has been engaged in joint research with BSI in the area of memory and learning. During this time, he has achieved internationally acclaimed results in developing techniques in the reversible silencing of specific neuronal circuits in the hippocampus of mice. In recognition of his achievements, RIKEN bestowed the RIKEN Fellowship on Dr. Tonegawa in 2007.

In the ten-year period since its establishment in 1997, BSI has promoted four areas of research: understanding the brain, protecting the brain, creating the brain, and nurturing the brain. To enhance the potential of the integration of these four areas and to tackle central issues in brain science in the future, BSI plans to reorganize its research at BSI into four core areas from 2008: Mind and Intelligence Research Core, Neural Circuit Function Research Core, Disease Mechanism Research Core, and Advanced Technology Development Core. BSI also plans to strengthen its collaborative ties with MIT and other research institutes both in Japan and overseas as it continues to engage in advanced research.

2. Brief history of Dr. Susumu Tonegawa, Professor of MIT

- 1939 Born in Aichi Prefecture
- 1963 Graduated from Kyoto University
- 1968 Received Ph.D. from University of California, San Diego
- 1969 Salk Research Institute (Post doctoral research)
- 1971 Chief Scientist, Basel Institute for Immunology
- 1981 Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 1988 Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator
- 1998 Director, RIKEN-MIT Neuroscience Research Center
- 2002 Director, Picower Center for Learning and Memory, MIT
- 2007 RIKEN Fellow/Special BSI Advisor

Achievements

- 1984 Order of Culture

1987 Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine

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Supplementary Remarks

1. RIKEN Fellow

The RIKEN Fellow is a title bestowed on internationally eminent scientists renowned for their achievements and knowledge and who are deemed to be invaluable in the development of areas of science where RIKEN is forging new ground. Dr. Susumu Tonegawa, Professor of MIT, is the first to receive this title.

2. Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator (HHMI Investigator)

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), a non-profit medical research organization that ranks as one of the largest philanthropies in the United States, plays a powerful role in advancing biomedical research and science education in the U.S. HHMI's principal mission is conducting basic biomedical research, which it carries out in collaboration with more than 60 universities, medical centers and other research institutions throughout the United States. Approximately 300 HHMI investigators, along with a scientific staff of more than 2,000, work at these institutions in Hughes laboratories. In a complementary program at HHMI's Janelia Farm Research Campus in Loudoun County, Virginia, leading scientists are pursuing long-term, high-risk, high-reward research in a campus specially designed to bring together researchers from disparate disciplines. HHMI researchers are widely recognized for their creativity and productivity: 122 HHMI investigators are members of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States and there are currently 12 Nobel laureates within the HHMI investigator community.

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